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ABSTRACT

Presidential campaigns in the last decade have provided evidence of the rising influence of the mass media campaign and of campaign consultants. The media, through their power of access to the people, manipulate the public's recognition of a candidate by the amount of coverage given. Newspaper endorsements and the reporting of media-conducted opinion polls are just two examples of how media affect a candidate's campaign. The media, especially television, have trended toward "horse race coverage," emphasizing the daily trivia of racing for votes and the stylistic similarities among campaigns, sports events, and soap operas. The most obvious effects of increased media attention to political campaigns are earlier starts and additional spending. The campaign consultant has increased correspondingly in influence as the media have assumed key roles in presidential campaigns. Consultants seek to manipulate the public media by producing favorable news about their candidate, timing the release of favorable news, and preventing unfavorable news. Consultants also try to effectively use controlled media, such as pamphlets, burper stickers, and lapel buttons. The effect of increased media and media consultant control over presidential campaigns has made the bland, issueless, and predictable campaign more commonplace and strategically wise. (RL)

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER REPORT NO. 417

WHO RUNS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS?

This report was written by Peter S. Kindsvatter, a masters candidate at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

When discussing the overall relationship between the media and the politician, it is fashionable to banter about such terms as the "adversary relationship," the "watchdog function," or the "fourth estate." All of these terms, however, describe only part of the relationship. They all fail to indicate the most important aspect — the interdependence of the media and the politician. Political scientist Richard Hofstetter describes this need to coexist:

> News media and politicians coexist in an environment perhaps best characterized as unstable and dynamic: both news personnel and politicians are essential to each other in different ways, and yet both operate within a context in which the causes and consequences of each other's behavior are frequently at odds. News personnel need access to newsworthy events that politicians control in large part, and politicians need channels of access to the public that news personnel control in large part.[1]

Although their motives may differ or even be at odds, the media and the politician nevertheless exist together in a symbiotic relationship — they need each other.

Recent Development in the Symbiotic Relationship

This relationship is, perhaps, strongest and most evident during a political campaign. Two recent developments in presidential campaigning, however, greatly affect this relationship and should be examined before further discussing candidate-media relations.

A. The rise of the mass-media campaign. Recent technological developments in the media, along with an increased media and public interest in presidential campaigns, joined with a decline in the traditional party machinery, has led to the establishment of the media as the primary means by which a candidate reaches his constituents. This is not to say that such traditional campaign tactics as whistle-stopping, handshaking, pork-barreling, and post-election patronage are no longer important, but they pale in comparison to the role now played by the mass media in modern presidential campaigning.

Many recent technological innovations in the media, starting most importantly with television and followed by innumerable developments such as satellites, portable tape recorders, minicameras, offset printing, high-speed wires, computerized newsrooms, etc., have resulted in what Daniel Boorstin referred to in 1961 as "round-the-clock" media, which are incessantly thirsty for more news and events to fill their ever-expanding capacity to move information across the country in record time.[2]

Not only can the media communicate presidential campaign news farther and faster than ever before, but there also is an increased desire on the part of the journalist to do so, as well as an increased public interest in receiving this information. Journalist and writer Timothy Crouse attributes this interest primarily to the prolific efforts of one man — historian Theodore White:

> The reason that 27 million reporters now show up for every koffee klatsch in New Hampshire has a lot to do with White's first book (**The Making of the President, 1960**). "When that book came out," said White, "it was like Columbus telling about America at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella. Goddam thing was an unbelievable success." . . .
>
> . . . It took eight to twelve years for the newspapers to accept White as an institution, but by 1972 most editors were sending off their men with rabid pep talks about the importance of sniffing out inside dope, getting background into the story, finding out what makes the campaign tick, and generally going beyond its old style of campaign reporting.[3]

Although some have complained, perhaps rightly, that Theodore White's books (one for each presidential campaign from 1960 through 1972) have led to a trivialization in campaign reporting — commentator Edwin Diamond calls it "Theodore White-washing." The popular impact of his work, as evidenced by the many spin-offs, has led, nevertheless, to a heightened media and public interest in presidential campaigns.[4]

At the same time that technical innovation and increased interest have made the presidential campaign a desirable and attainable news target, there has been a decline in the power of the traditional two-party system. Diamond says of the 1976 campaign: "The traditional political parties have been weakened by population shifts, by the breakdown of old

Summary: The rise of both the mass media and the campaign consultant in the last decade of elections has left the public questioning the type of information they receive. The campaign, rather than being a platform of political issues, has become merely another form of entertainment.

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coalitions, and by the growing emphasis on mass media campaigns."[5] As a result, the candidates' targets for persuasion are no longer a relatively small number of party bosses. Instead, the presidential candidate must appeal through the mass media directly to a wide constituency, which formerly he could reach through the party bosses:

> In the bad old days, a candidate had to reach a relatively small number of fat-cat givers and power brokers. Now, each candidate must win over hundreds of delegates, potential campaign workers, and many small contributors; he must convince them that he is indeed a "viable" candidate. . . . "Viability" means: **the press is taking the candidate seriously; so should the voters.**[6]

What has resulted is a campaign in which the candidate, not the party, is the key. Theodore White describes this phenomenon in the 1972 campaign:

> Both national parties as they presented themselves to the American people in 1972 had come, by no one's design, to reflect the wills and personalities of two individual candidates. The candidates' personal staffs were responsible not to what their parties stood for, but to what they thought their candidate stood for. Neither campaign represented more than what its candidate said, or wanted, or permitted.[7]

This emphasis on the candidate, and his need to reach his constituents through the mass media instead of through party channels, has had a direct bearing on the second recent development in presidential campaigning — the campaign consultant.

B. The rise of the campaign consultant. Consultants (or managers, as they are sometimes called) are public relations experts whose job it is to portray the candidate in a favorable light. The mass media obviously are the primary tool (and "tool" is specifically the word used by public relations practitioners[8]) for conveying such messages as the consultant deems necessary.

The rise of the campaign consultant reflects an ongoing trend in business. This consultant is no mere publicity flack from the days of P. T. Barnum — he is increasingly becoming a key adviser to the candidate. Public relations director Melvyn Bloom explains:

> But to the degree that presidential campaigning is now essentially a process of communication to broad publics, the public relations man and other related professionals hold sway. His profession has become increasingly "scientific," and, . . . he now routinely makes broad use of a whole range of devices and skills, including research, advertising, public-opinion polling, data processing, and so on. From the concept of a need to consult with the public relations man in his special areas of expertise has evolved a broader and yet more special profession of campaign consulting and campaign management.[9]

Indeed, this consultant, as Bloom notes, will sell a presidential candidate, not through issues or party platforms, but through personality: "In the American two-party system, political parties are no longer supported by the electorate primarily because of ideological loyalties. And, when political parties cease to be ideologically distinctive, the personalities of the candidates assume much greater — in fact overriding — significance."[10]

If anyone doubts this significance of personality over issues, one needs only note this interview in 1976 between political writer Stephen Brill and then-candidate Jimmy Carter:

> I mentioned that the [Vietnam] war might have been one of the issues that gave birth to the McGovern campaign [in 1972], and not vice-versa. Carter stared back blankly and said, "That's not how it works."
>
> Carter says he decided to run for the 1976 Democratic Presidential nomination in September of 1972 . . . — before the revelations of Watergate, the energy crisis, the fall of South Vietnam, the economic downturn, and most events that should shape the '76 race. These issues, however, were irrelevant to Carter's decision because he knew he'd run on personality.[11]

The significance of the mass media and the political consultant has arisen, therefore, from both political and societal changes. The interdependence of both parties has grown strong; neither party can afford to ignore the other in their struggle to achieve their often opposing goals.

Media Effects on the Candidate's Campaign

A. The media are the Great Mentioner. A candidate can, to some extent, bypass the news media and reach the people directly through advertising, direct mailing, telephoning, personal contact, and what remains of the party machinery. However, given the size and scope of the presidential campaign, such measures are insufficient by themselves — the candidate must attract and hold the media's attention, and he must do so early in the campaign.

Granted, some candidates — an incumbent president, for example — do not have this problem. For most candidates, however, the first requirement is to attract a media following early in the pre-election year. This requirement imparts on the press what political scientist Leon Sigal describes as the role of the Great Mentioner:

> The impact of the news media lies in their role as the Great Mentioner — paying attention to some candidates and not to others, conferring name recognition on the few, thereby boosting their standing in the polls and increasing their future news coverage.[12]

Crouse also describes this recently acquired media role as it was evidenced in the 1972 campaign:

> Now the press screened the candidates, usurping the party's old function. By reporting a man's political strengths, they made him a front runner; by mentioning his weaknesses and liabilities, they cut him down. Teddy White, even in his wildest flights of megalomania, had never allowed himself this kind of power.[13]

Not all media organizations, however, have the same influence in this role. In a presidential campaign, it is the media "elites" who are the most influential. Sigal calls them the "Big Eleven":

> The three television networks and two wire services are the principal wholesalers. Two news weeklies and four newspapers — **The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post,** and the **Los Angeles Times,** along with their associated news services — are retailers in exclusive markets, catering to the nation's political elite . . . the Big Eleven dominate the national political news market. And among the Big Eleven there is opinion leadership.[14]

Taking the case a step further, it follows that the political correspondents of these organizations are the bellwethers for

the rest of the reporters. Crouse calls them the media "heavies," and their opinions carry considerable weight in the candidate selection process:

> The journalists involved in this selection process were a very small group, consisting mostly of the national political correspondents, and they formed what David Broder called "the screening committee."[15]

Media non-selectees are virtually doomed. Minority party candidates are habitually included in this group of non-selectees. Eugene McCarthy described his efforts to attract media attention during the 1976 campaign as akin to "walking through deep snow."[16]

If one is so inclined to chalk this up as mere bitterness on the part of a losing candidate, one need only consider the results of a content analysis of **Time**, **Newsweek**, and **U.S. News and World Report** concerning their coverage of third-party candidates in 1976:

> . . . more than 14,000 square inches of space were used to cover Presidential candidates. Of this amount, roughly 2% was devoted to independent or third-party candidates and of this figure, less than 1% was about McCarthy in particular.[17]

Of course, ways for a candidate to improve his chances of attracting the media do exist. All it takes is time, money, and a large flock of campaign consultants.

B. "The tube calls the shots."[18] The biggest recent technical media innovation, of course, is television, which has played a primary role in the development of the mass media campaign. It is also the most controversial medium — its effects are often debated, with no clear consensus of opinion resulting.

There is, however, one effect of television on which most critics concur: Television "calls the shots" in a presidential campaign. Despite studies indicating that television campaign coverage, and even television campaign advertising, have a minimal effect on the voter, candidates and their PR consultants nevertheless accord television top priority in their plans and schemes.[19] This is undoubtedly because of television's key role as a Great Mentioner, if not as a great persuader. Hence, rightly or wrongly, television has a tremendous impact on how a candidate conducts his campaign.

Examples of how candidates cater to television abound. Schedules are tailored to allow television crews to shoot their footage of the candidate prior to the daily filing deadline, usually early in the afternoon Eastern Standard Time. EST must be emphasized — the New York-based networks run on EST, and a candidate and his staff had better remember it. McGovern's campaign consultant Frank Mankiewicz explains: "Any politician in California who wants to make national news will hold his press conference, drive his electric car or deliver his discussion on planetary realism before noon. If he waits, he will miss deadlines for the Evening News."[20]

Another example is the increasing prominence of the television crew in the reporter pool. When a candidate is involved in an activity (e.g. a helicopter trip) that does not permit the entire pack of campaign reporters to accompany him, a small pool of reporters is selected to represent the entire group. Because of television's impact, or its perceived impact, candidates increasingly give television crews preferential treatment in selection. Robert Walters gives a good example from the 1976 campaign:

> The three networks this year [1976] persuaded the Carter staff that they all required full-time membership in the "pool." The result is that a dozen network employees are constantly at Carter's side while he is campaigning, but scores of other journalists are kept at a distance by Secret Service agents.[21]

In previous elections, the usual "pool" included only one four-man television crew for all three networks.

One final example of television's increasing impact on campaigns is the change presidential nominating conventions have undergone to accommodate television. Walters explains:

> The . . . presidential nominating conventions were the first to be taken over by the networks — or, more correctly, handed over by politicians who thought no price was too high to pay for four consecutive evenings of "prime time" network exposure.
>
> Both parties now carefully "script" their convention sessions. . . . The convention halls are lighted to network specifications . . . and the networks' huge booths high above the floor symbolize their dominance of the hall.[22]

It might be interesting to add that, in 1972, the Republican convention was scripted by the Nixon PR organization. This caused a "stir" in 1972 when it was discovered.[23] Now such scripting goes without mentioning.

Some television critics argue that television power is a "myth," that it does not persuade any substantial number of voters to change their minds through either news or advertising. Political scientists Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure, two such critics, conducted an exhaustive study of every network news broadcast and campaign commercial during the 1972 general election period. The bottom line of their study is:

> Indeed, in most accounts, television is thought to be the most powerful medium available for persuading and communicating with the electorate. Despite the certitude with which these beliefs are held, they are inaccurate.[24]

Patterson and McClure go on to detail the lack of persuasive abilities of TV advertising, as well as the low information, or issue, content of TV news. (In fact, campaign advertising was found to contain more useful "issue" information than the actual news broadcasts).

This raises an interesting paradox — Sig Mickelson, former CBS News president, notes:

> It is interesting to speculate as to why television can be both a focus of so much attention as the most dramatic factor on the electoral scene and as ineffectual a force on election results as the evidence seems to indicate.[25]

The answer, of course, is that people are interested in the drama of presidential campaigns, and television is the master medium for dramatics. Hence, people watch. And if people watch, the presidential hopefuls will want to corner the market — regardless of what researchers have to say. National correspondent James McCarthy summed it up well after the 1976 election:

> What is going on is a fundamental, and observable, change in the way campaigns are run and the way they are covered. What we have witnessed has been the emergence of the dominance of television in presidential campaigning, and its influence on both candidates and journalists.[26]

C. The horse race effect. Another recent impact on the campaign has been what many media critics refer to as "horse-race" coverage of presidential campaigns. Again, television is seen as the primary culprit in this trend, but other media must share the blame. Patterson and McClure state the case:

> On network television, all presidential campaigns are covered like horse races. The election in 1972 provided a clear test of this determination because it demanded no such coverage — it was never much of a contest at all. Nonetheless, it was made into a sports event with overtones of a soap-opera series.[27]

Such horse-race coverage and its manifestations, such as media polling, tend to stress the trivia of the campaign. McCartney calls this "the triumph of junk news,"[28] where the concern is not the issues, but rather who is winning the race.

D. Newspaper endorsements. Many argue that television, which studies have shown has become the primary news media for many people, has usurped any power that endorsements may have in affecting voter decisions. This appears to be the case if one looks at endorsements in the 1976 campaign: **Editor and Publisher** polls showed 411 daily papers endorsing Ford and only 80 endorsing Carter. Indeed, since 1932 papers have always supported Republican candidates (the sole exception being Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964), but Republicans have won only half the time.[29]

However, if one looks below the surface, newspaper endorsements do appear to affect the candidate's chances. Television has not usurped the role of the written press in campaigns. Communications researcher John Robinson, who has analyzed the media in all the presidential campaigns since the 1952 campaign, has discovered that: ". . . television has functioned more to supplement than to replace the media that preceded it. Only slight declines in newspaper and magazine use during campaigns are found over the period in which television has become the dominant medium."[30]

Furthermore, Robinson discovered that readers tend to place more trust in their local newspapers. Also, they like the clear-cut message contained in the newspaper endorsement — clarity not found in television:

> In contrast to the editorial endorsements of newspapers, however, television seldom offers its own message to the voters on how they ought to cast their ballots. The newspaper endorsement is a direct message, which appears to reduce objectively the confusing arguments of the campaign to a single conclusion.[31]

The result of Robinson's survey of the 1972 campaign showed that "newspaper endorsements contribute a 7% difference in voting behavior after the other variables have been controlled," and a similar study of the 1968 campaign yielded a 6% difference.[32]

E. Effects of media polls. The media's use of polling (either of the candidates' standings in popularity or of the public's stand on campaign issues) is very much on the increase. Many see this as a healthy and even necessary trend. Correspondent Stephen Isaacs agrees when he paraphrases Jack Rosenthal of the **Times**, who in the 1972 campaign worked with pollster Yankelovich:

> . . . the jet plane and television have made polling imperative. In earlier days . . . good "seat-of-the-pants" political reporters could cover a presidential campaign by traveling with the candidates by train, say, and getting a feel for how they were doing and how the electorate was responding. Such reporting is impossible now, since candidates gear their appeals to the media markets.
>
> No other way than surveying exists to gauge a campaign's effectiveness as it comes into living rooms. . . .[33]

Not only are polls on the increase, but the media have improved their ability to conduct their own polls (in the past they usually hired an outside agency) and then properly interpret and report the results.[34] Pollster Albert Cantril praises the media's improvements in polling techniques:

> The mass media are becoming more self-conscious in their dealings with the pollsters. . . . Perhaps it is due to the growing direct involvement of print and broadcast media in their own polling ventures. Or perhaps it is a sign of the times. In any case, it is a good omen.[35]

The effects of polling on the candidates' campaigns are varied. Correspondent Philip Meyer indicated one positive effect of media polling in his discussion of the 1976 campaign:

> A few years ago, when polls first became widely used by political candidates, it was feared that the findings would be used for subtle manipulations of the public mood. It now appears that use of polls by the news media can inhibit that sort of thing . . .[36]

In other words, media polls may serve as a "check-and-balance" against polls conducted by the candidates.

Some polling critics, however, see several adverse effects of polling on the presidential campaign. Bloom fears that polling results merely serve as another weapon in the candidate's public relations arsenal, to be used to the candidate's advantage.

> The general tendency is for presidential candidates to be quite willing to modify their own judgment (if indeed, they still have any) to fit what the polls indicate they 'should' say and do in order to get elected.[37]

But a complaint heard from candidates is that polling results adversely affect their fund-raising and staff-recruitment efforts. After the 1972 campaign, Isaacs quoted Mankiewicz, McGovern's campaign consultant, as saying that ". . . from the outset poll results had devastating impact on McGovern's efforts to raise money. They were very damaging to morale, too, in terms of volunteer workers, manning headquarters, getting people out into the street canvassing."[38]

Bloom takes further issue with polling for oversimplifying and, therefore, distorting issues:

> The pol[illegible], in their abbreviated and simplistic approach to he issues of the day, serve to mask the complexities of our decision-making processes . . .[39]

A final criticism of polling, as voiced by several of the TV critics, is that polling adds to, and is actually a part of, the "horse-race" technique of campaign reporting. After all, one must know what the "odds" are before placing a bet.

F. The mass media campaign affects campaign costs and length. A final, but important, effect of the media on the presidential campaign has been to cause a significant increase in the length of the campaigning period, with an accompanying increase in costs.

This development harks back to the earlier discussion of the rise of the mass media campaign (and the decline of the party system). Because of the need to gain the support of a wide constituency, instead of a relatively small number of "bosses," the candidate must early woo the mass media in time to build sufficient support for the myriad of primaries.

The strategy is to start early and spend a lot of money wisely to get the attention of the "Great Mentioner." Professor of Journalism Edwin Emery describes this phenomenon in the 1976 primaries:

> Presidential primaries . . . through the month of April demonstrated almost uniformly that the candidates who spent the most money and the most campaign time won their elections. The campaign

> time was spent most effectively in local versions of whistle-stopping and in maneuvering for media coverage in television news programs, television interviews, and newspaper stories and pictures.[40]

It should be noted that in 1968 the candidates had 17 primaries to worry about. In 1976 there were 30.[41] In the 1972 campaign, it was considered unusual when George McGovern announced his candidacy on the "early" date of Jan. 19, 1972. Teddy Kennedy announced his candidacy for the 1980 election on Nov. 7, 1979 — not to mention that his unofficial campaign started some months earlier. This trend is likely to continue.

The Effects of the Campaign Consultant on the Media

Whether the media's effects are beneficial or detrimental, it is, nevertheless, evident that the media have assumed a key role in the presidential campaign. It is precisely because of this key role as intermediary between the presidential hopeful and his voting public that the media have become the main "target" of the candidates' public relations consultants.

The consultant and his often considerable staff attempt to manipulate a variety of communications "tools," of which the mass media are but a portion, albeit a very important portion. Political consultant Joseph Napolitan (Hubert Humphrey's campaign consultant in 1972) describes what "media" means to a public relations man: "Generally, in politics, media can be divided into two large categories: controlled and uncontrolled, or, paid and unpaid, or even, advertising and public relations."[42]

The campaign consultant must persuade the uncontrolled (public) media to view his candidate favorably, and at the same time establish a coordinated, comprehensive advertising campaign through the controlled (paid) media, which by definition are media in which the consultant directly "controls" the input by buying time or space. It is an irony of our capitalist system that the mass media serve simultaneously as both controlled and uncontrolled media. At the same time that the press is proclaiming its adversary role, ferreting out the "facts" of the campaign, the political consultant is placing an often heavy dose of advertising in that same media.

A. Efforts to affect the uncontrolled (public) media. The uncontrolled media refer, of course, to the public media (broadcast news and print media). The public media are "uncontrolled" in the eyes of the campaign consultant because he cannot directly influence the editorial content. The consultant, therefore, must resort to indirect methods to influence, or "manage," editorial content.

The targets of this news management are the members of the media who follow the candidate about on a daily basis — the campaign reporters — the "boys on the bus."[43] By managing, or controlling, the news that reaches these reporters and cameramen, the campaign consultant can, to a large extent, manage the editorial content of the national media.

Additionally, it's important to remember that the degree to which a consultant uses these news management techniques varies considerably depending on what stage of the campaign the candidate is in.[44] Again, the symbiotic relationship is at work. The candidate needs the press exposure — needs the blessing of the Great Mentioner — particularly in the earlier stages of the campaign (pre-election year and early primaries). In this early period, there is much less control or management of news exercised by the consultant because the candidate needs as much exposure as possible. Consequently, reporters will be allowed to chat with the candidate, conduct interviews and ask serious questions (and perhaps get a serious answer).

However, as the campaign progresses to the later stages (late primaries and convention period), those candidates who have been scrutinized by the media's Big Eleven and have received their seal of approval, are much less anxious to talk openly to the growing ranks of campaign reporters. Hence, news management increases. By the time the general election stage is entered, press-candidate relations are quite formalized.[45]

Finally, there is a special class of candidate that has certain inherent advantages throughout this news management process — the incumbent running for re-election. This "power of the incumbency" will be discussed following an examination of the three news management methods:

• Producing Favorable News

The primary role of the campaign consultant is to tailor the campaign to allow for maximum exposure of his candidate's image or personality.

The simplest way to maximize such favorable "news" is, of course, to produce it oneself. This results in what is widely referred to as the media event. The media event is such a common occurrence today that it is difficult to conceive of a time when such events were limited to a few publicity stunts and collegiate hoaxes. Within the last 30 years, however, the media event has developed and proliferated parallel to the development of the mass media. The term "media event" undoubtedly had its origin in 1961, when Daniel Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event."[46]

Boorstin discusses at length the political pseudo-event:

> New forms of pseudo-events, especially in the world of politics, thus offer a new kind of bewilderment to both politicians and newsmen. The politician . . . himself in a sense composes the story; the journalist . . . himself generates the event.[47]

Such media events are universally decried as shallow, phoney, misleading, trivial, etc. Who to blame for them, however, is another matter. Many blame the public relations and advertising people who dream them up. Others soundly berate the media, particularly television, for eagerly covering such events.

According to John Midgley, the fault lies, of course, with both groups.

> A reciprocal manipulation is, indeed, implicit in the whole idea of a "media event" — Reagan throwing a snowball in New Hampshire, say, or William Colby pulling out a poison pistol for Senator Frank Church and Senator Barry Goldwater to handle — since press and personages [candidates] are each acting expressly to meet the other's need.[48]

The ultimate campaign media event is the nominating convention. The degree to which the campaign consultant tailors these affairs to the needs of television has already been discussed. Conventions are now carefully scripted by both parties to ensure maximum, beneficial, prime-time television coverage.[49]

• Timing the Release of Favorable News

Not only must the campaign consultant generate favorable news for his candidate through numerous media events, but he must also ensure that such news is released at the proper time for maximum effect.

A campaign consultant is aware of the various filing times each media has, and will use them to his advantage. By properly timing his releases, the consultant can ensure that the media have sufficient time to digest the information — be it an announcement, a handout, a speech text, or a full-blown media event. Consultants who release important "good"

news too late for the reporter or cameraman to file for that day's edition of the news are only guaranteeing that the information will not be used, or, if it is, that it will be relegated to a back page of the next day's edition.

Finally, the news must be measured out in an even flow. Crouse credits the Nixon staff in 1972 with this ability:

> From Nixon on down, the people in the White House knew the art of feeding news to the press at a proper digestible rate, doling out just the right amount at the right time. The McGovern people never mastered the technique. McGovern's press secretary was never around. There never seemed to be enough filing time. Reporters who had to write in the afternoon kept getting assigned to afternoon pools.[50]

• Preventing Unfavorable News

Generating "good" news is only half the picture. The campaign consultant needs to ensure that no damaging news tarnishes the image, or, if such news is unavoidable, to delay the release and minimize its effects. This, of course, means controlling the source of the news.

Obviously, bad news can generate from outside sources beyond the campaign manager's control. But the consultant can control those sources within the campaign that the reporter relies on for information. These sources are the candidate's staff and, naturally, the candidate himself. In the consultant's line of reasoning, either of these two sources can be, and have often been, the generator of "bad" news, either intentionally or accidentally.

The candidate's staff and the campaign reporters often spend months together on the campaign trail, and it is natural for friendships and acquaintances to be made. Consequently, a candidate's staff often becomes a source of "inside" information for the reporter.

Such an uncontrolled source of news is anathema to the consultant. Therefore, he will attempt to restrict press access to the campaign staff. Also, he will tell the staff what they should or should not say. The effect that an "uncontrolled" staff can have on the amount of "bad" news that leaks out is best illustrated by the 1972 campaign. Evidence this brief exchange between Gary Hart (McGovern's campaign manager) and reporter James Perry during a Nieman Center conference after the campaign:

Hart. I'd like to ask the reporters their opinion on whether the McGovern campaign was too open. Were we too available?

Perry. It was the most garrulous staff that I've ever seen — they lined up to talk to you.

Hart. I guess that answers my question. Wait until next time.[51]

Crouse further illuminates:

> It is one thing for a candidate to see the press frequently and answer their questions honestly, which McGovern tried to do. . . . However, it is another thing for a campaign staff to talk openly about its problems, funds, and discontents. That is the political equivalent of indecent exposure, and the McGovern staffers indulged in it with a relish that bordered on wantonness.[52]

Compare the above to the philosophy of Jeb Magruder from Nixon's 1972 staff:

> The Nixon campaign always had a relatively controlled press policy. We always were accessible in campaign headquarters, but under controlled conditions. We wanted interviews to be scheduled through the press office so that we would have some knowledge of output. . . . I don't think there is any reason why, in running a campaign, we shouldn't control the output of our own employees.[53]

Not only must staff "output" be controlled, but the campaign manager must control the "output" of the candidate himself, traditionally done by coaching the candidate as to what he should say or write through speech writers, pamphleteers, briefing books, etc. These measures are certainly not new and do not directly impact on the campaign reporters.

Direct and strong impact comes when the campaign consultant restricts the press' access to the candidate. The consultant issues a daily schedule concerning the candidate's activities, which includes exactly how much time the reporters will have to question and photograph him.[54] The fewer the contacts, the fewer the chances of any bad news being generated. As the campaign enters its later stages, this is increasingly evident: Leubsdorf wrote in 1976:

> While reporters prefer open campaigns and feel they are good for the country, one unfortunate lesson of 1972 was that a candidate may be better off the more he can control his campaign and keep its details away from press and public scrutiny.[55]

One overriding factor is the candidate's security. Secret Service men can be used adroitly to physically escort or position the press in certain "cordoned-off" areas. Also involved in the security precautions is the requirement for all press members to have their credentials approved by the Secret Service, which helps limit the total number of reporters and allows some control of their comings and goings.[56]

One of the consultant's handiest gadgets is the multiplexer — a portable electronic box that supplies audio to anyone who plugs into it. Consequently, the consultant can put the press in a separate room from where the candidate is speaking and pipe in the sound. As radio newsman George Bailey notes: "In a real sense the mult[iplexer] is the newsmaker. Newspeople have to connect to it rather than the candidate."[57]

The consultant's use of the multiplexer box is a good example of adherence to the "keep-them-happy-while-you-keep-them-isolated" rule. Gadgetry such as the multiplexer and closed circuit television, accompanied by more traditional PR releases, provide some soothing, though usually unimportant, news tidbits for the isolated reporters. Another aspect of this "keep-them-contented" rule is to provide attractive physical accommodations (rooms, refreshments, etc.) during traveling. As Leubsdorf writes of the 1972 Nixon campaign: "Life was made as easy as possible for the traveling press — good hotels, relaxed hours — and the coverage was generally uncritical."[58]

Nice accommodations could cease rather abruptly, however, for the reporter who rebels from this controlled atmosphere. To deal with a rebellious reporter who continues to ask embarrassing questions and to write embarrassing stories, the campaign consultant may resort to the "freeze-out." This term and its tactics became popular in the Nixon Administration and has since become a part of the journalistic vernacular.[59] Efforts to shut off information to a troublesome reporter could include leaving the reporter out of all pools, relegating him to the bus or airplane furthest from the candidate, and most importantly of all, seeing to it that no useful information is "leaked" to him. Usually it is not long before the "frozen-out" reporter is in trouble with his organization because everyone else is outscooping him.

Of what value, then, are such isolated campaign reporters to the newsgathering process? John Midgley, for one, feels that the stifling isolation outweighs any possible advantage, or value, that the campaign reporter has:

> Belonging to the caravan carries the advantage of permitting continuous observation, but the price of dependence, in isolation from the scenes that are gliding by and the voters who are being courted, in being told where to stand on the tarmac and when to get into the bus, mostly outweighs the advantage.[60]

Finally, we must consider a special candidate in any presidential election — the president, a candidate with certain inherent advantages, which are both non-media and media related. The non-media advantages can be summed up succinctly — the pork barrel. The primary media-related advantage is that the incumbent already has the Great Mentioner's seal of approval — wherever the President goes and whatever he does is news. As Leubsdorf noted during the 1976 primaries:

> Not only does the president [Ford] have the power to make appointments and other decisions that can help him politically — Florida was flooded with federal goodies and nominations in the weeks preceding the March 9 primary — but he is assured far greater press coverage than any other candidate.[61]

The all-time great powerful incumbent candidate was certainly Richard Nixon in 1972. Not only did he enjoy the Great Mentioner's seal of approval, but also, because of his established popularity, he could campaign less. Thus, he didn't need to confront issues or, most importantly, the media. This resulted in what political reporter Jules Witcover calls the non-campaign:

> I am not going to insult your intelligence tonight or impose upon your time by rehashing the issues of the campaign or making any last-minute charges against our opponents. You know what the issues are . . .
>
> President Nixon
> election-eve telecast from San Clemente
> Nov. 6, 1972
>
> With the above statement, Richard M. Nixon concluded the slickest noncampaign for reelection in American presidential history. . . . It was not simply on election eve that he declined to insult the intelligence of the voters or impose upon their time by rehashing the issues; he exercised the same deference throughout the campaign.[62]

Critics are quick to point out that the United States will never again allow another "Richard Nixon" to take office, and this is possibly true. But, regardless of that, the highly professional public relations procedures that Nixon developed are alive and well today.

B. Utilizing the controlled media

The consultant's ability to influence the editorial content of the public media through such techniques is, indeed, a controversial and discomforting subject. However, attention also must be given to the campaign consultant's considerable use of the controlled media. In addition to broadcast and print advertising, controlled media includes the myriad of communications tools produced directly by the campaign staff — pamphlets, direct mail, telephone and neighborhood canvassing, bumper stickers, lapel buttons, and so on.

Despite the critics' emphasis on public media-candidate relationships, and the lengths to which campaign consultants go to manage editorial content, the fact remains that the mass media tool that plays the largest part in the consultant's plan is advertising. Gerald Ford, for example, in 1976 spent $21.8 million in federal campaign funds on broadcast advertising.[63]

The biggest impact that campaign advertising has is that it avoids the media-candidate relationship entirely. The consultant has direct control over advertising content — there is no editorial gatekeeping to worry about, as campaign consultant Joseph Napolitan notes in his discussion of broadcast advertising:

> . . . the chief advantage of electronic advertising is the opportunity it provides the candidate to deliver his message directly to the people, without editing; and if for no other reason this factor makes electronic media the most important tool at the candidate's disposal in major political campaigns.[64]

Hence, there can be no discussion of the "symbiotic relationship" when discussing the use of controlled media. At best, there is only the capitalistic relationship — the public media need the money (and a vast amount of money is spent for advertising) and the candidate needs the unedited exposure of his image.

Because of its directness, advertising, particularly TV advertising, is the favored tool of the campaign consultant. Despite convincing studies to the effect that television's ability to persuade voters is minimal, consultants nevertheless swear by television advertising.[65] Napolitan describes this attitude:

> It has become fashionable for some critics of political campaigns to say that television has outlived its usefulness, that voters do not respond to television advertising, that, in fact, voters resent candidates who use television and turn against them.
>
> My response to such comments is to say that some day I hope to become involved in a political campaign where my candidate's opponent actually believes such statements. . . .[66]

Though admittedly the largst, television advertising is but one segment of the range of controlled media available to the consultant. The consultant must coordinate all his controlled media to ensure that a harmonious message, or image, of the candidate is being produced. Additionally, the candidate's image in personal and public media encounters must match the image being portrayed in the controlled media. This is a complicated task, but one at which political consultants are increasingly adept. Political scientist Dan Nimmo notes that this trend toward coordinating the message began in the 1968 campaign: "the . . . professionals [consultants] coordinated appeals via television, radio, newspapers, personal appearances to convey a consistent theme, message, and set of candidate qualities."[67]

As a result of this coordinated effort, it comes as little surprise that advertising content is berated for displaying the same shortcomings as does editorial content. After all, both messages are from the same mold. Researchers Hofstetter and Zukin discovered in their analysis of advertising content:

> The candidates tended to avoid linkages to the major parties in their advertising during the 1972 campaign, making it a highly personalized, candidate-centered affair from that vantage point.[68]

Finally, there has been considerable discussion about the consultant's efforts to favorably portray a coordinated image of his candidate in a diversity of controlled, as well as public, media. One hopes that the image portrayed would be an accurate reflection of the candidate's personality and characteristics. Unfortunately, this is apparently not always the case. Instead, the consultant looks for images that are in vogue. Nimmo describes the fashionable, "post-Watergate" images:

> . . . the content of mass advertising and publicity in the 1970s reiterates themes professional image

> makers regard in vogue — establish the candidate's credibility, . . . emphasize the qualities of a nonpolitician, and remove from the candidate the stigma of the old politics.[69]

Conclusion

Finally, what overall effect are the campaign consultants and the results of their tactics, as reflected in the media, having on the modern presidential campaign? Many critics fear the worse; they see such public relations tactics as being increasingly effective. Consequently, they fear that the consultant is increasingly able to manipulate the editorial content of the media and to enhance the effects of this manipulation through a controlled, coordinated advertising campaign.

The bland, issueless and predictable campaign, which is more and more common, may be the offspring of the dominant role public relations plays in politics. This, coupled with long, drawn-out campaigns, gives birth to growing voter apathy. The final result of such a controlled campaign may be the election of a candidate about whom virtually nothing, beyond the personality he has chosen to project, is known. The question "Who is that man?" may frequently accompany future campaigns.

Critics maintain that it is time for new campaign-coverage techniques; the "boys on the bus" no longer appear able to capture, or extract, the critical information concerning campaign issues, candidate leadership qualities, or campaign tactics. The media seem slow to change or adapt — the professional campaign consultant is not. Indeed, at this late stage, it does not seem unreasonable to call upon the media for a more sophisticated response.

FOOTNOTES

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